

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF RAISED BILL NO. 1044,
AN ACT REQUIRING THE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES TO
CONDUCT ABUSE OR NEGLECT INVESTIGATIONS OF YOUTHS ARRESTED
FOR PROSTITUTION
AND
RAISED BILL NO. 1045, AN ACT PROVIDING HOMELESS YOUTHS AND
EMANCIPATED MINORS ACCESS TO BIRTH CERTIFICATES**

March 1, 2011

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Center for Children's Advocacy, a private, non-profit legal organization based at the University of Connecticut School of Law. The Center provides holistic legal services for poor children in Connecticut's communities through individual representation and systemic advocacy. I am an attorney at the Center and the Director of the Center's Teen Legal Advocacy Clinic, which provides legal services to teens throughout the state. In addition, I am the Chair of the Connecticut Team on Runaway and Homeless Youth,¹ a statewide group of professionals interested in improving access to services and supports for runaway and homeless youth in the state of Connecticut. The Team is comprised of state agencies including the Department of Children and Families (DCF), Court Support Services Division, and the State Department of Education, as well as private providers throughout the state including The Center for Children's Advocacy, The Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport, RYASAP, CT Coalition to End Homelessness, True Colors, Kids in Crisis as well as others.



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I am testifying today to urge you to support Raised Bill No. 1044, "An Act Requiring the Department of Children and Families to Conduct Abuse or Neglect Investigations of Youth Arrested for Prostitution" and Raised Bill No. 1045, "An Act Providing Homeless Youths And Emancipated Minors Access to Birth Certificates." By all accounts, the number of homeless youth has increased in CT. (Please see attached data.) The Center is supporting these bills because we believe they will improve Connecticut's ability to provide supports and services to this *invisible* population. We also hear the stories from youth who are living on their own about the obstacles they face and we believe these bills will help remove some of those obstacles.

¹ The Connecticut Team on Runaway and Homeless Youth was convened in the summer of 2008 in response to a request by the American Bar Association's Committee on Homelessness and Poverty as well as the National Network for Youth that each state bring together advocates to affect systemic change on behalf of runaway and homeless youth.

Raised Bill No. 1044, "An Act Requiring the Department of Children and Families to Conduct Abuse or Neglect Investigations of Youth Arrested for Prostitution."

What we know is that within 48 hours of leaving their home 1 in 3 teens will be lured into prostitution.² This is a very real threat. Because we know that homeless youth are targets to be lured into the life of prostitution (also called domestic minor sex trafficking), it is important that we have a mechanism for ensuring that these youth get access to critical supports and services. The first point of contact to access this help is through law enforcement with a referral to DCF. Law enforcement is the most likely entity to come into contact with these victims and DCF is best suited to provide help to these victims.

The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth states that parental abuse and neglect is a primary cause of homelessness among unaccompanied youth (homeless youth who are on their own).³ The National Network for Youth estimates that according to studies of a homeless youth sample, 33% had been in foster care, 51% had been physically abused, and 60% of girls and 23% of boys had been sexually abused.⁴

Through our work with DCF on the CT Team on Runaway and Homeless Youth, we understand that DCF has identified 65 cases of youth involved in domestic minor sex trafficking. Many of these involve youth already known to DCF. This bill would help to encourage the reporting of those not already involved with DCF, those who have gone without any supports and services.

Raised Bill No. 1044 is modeled after a successful Illinois bill which requires child welfare involvement for anyone under 18 years old who is suspected of prostitution.⁵ It would make very clear that 16 and 17 year olds who are involved in prostitution need access to supports and services. **Please support Raised Bill No. 1044.**

Raised Bill No. 1045, "An Act Providing Homeless Youths And Emancipated Minors Access to Birth Certificates."

This bill would remove one of the many obstacles faced by unaccompanied homeless youth who are attempting to find work and move out of homelessness. I get the calls from youth who are on their own and cannot get copies of their birth certificates in order to get work, get a Connecticut Identification Card, sign up for food stamps or cash assistance, or become involved in a job training opportunity. Providers for homeless youth also tell us that this is an obstacle in referring youth for needed services.

² The Salvation Army- STOP IT Initiative Against Human Trafficking citing the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, http://www.usc.salvationarmy.org/usc/www_usc_stopit.nsf/vw-text-index/954dc06d95b9cad8862573d200680763?opendocument.

³ "Using What We Know: Supporting the Education of Unaccompanied Homeless Youth." 39, Julianelle, Patricia, The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, February 2008, available at http://www.naehcy.org/dl/uwwk_youth.pdf.

⁴ "Unaccompanied Youth: Fast Facts" National Network for Youth, citing YouthCare, Inc., 1998, available at http://www.nn4youth.org/media/factsheets/FactSheet_Unacompanied_Youth.pdf.

⁵ Illinois Legislative Service, 2010 Legislative Session, HB 6462 section 10, "An Act Concerning Criminal Law."

The language in Raised Bill No. 1045 would allow certain professionals including school district homeless liaisons, the director or designees of youth and adult shelters to certify that the youth is homeless. Then the youth would be able to request a copy of his/her birth certificate. This language mirrors the process outlined in the federal College Cost Reduction Act for unaccompanied homeless youth to access college financial aid. It would also help in encouraging youth to access support services.

The American Bar Association and the National Network for Youth recently published a book entitled "Runaway and Homeless Youth and the Law: Model State Statutes," where they emphasize the importance of homeless youth having access to identification documents, including birth certificates. They also note that other states have provided for flexibility in birth certificate requests (citing Pennsylvania, Maryland, Mississippi, and Texas).⁶

Raised Bill No. 1045 is a no-cost way to eliminate obstacles for homeless youth. Please support this important bill.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
Respectfully submitted,



Attorney Stacey Violante Cote
Director, Teen Legal Advocacy Clinic
Chair, CT Team on Runaway and Homeless Youth

⁶ Horton-Newell, Amy, Meyer, Katie & Trupin, Casey. "Runaway and Homeless Youth and the Law: Model State Statutes," pp 111-113 (2009).

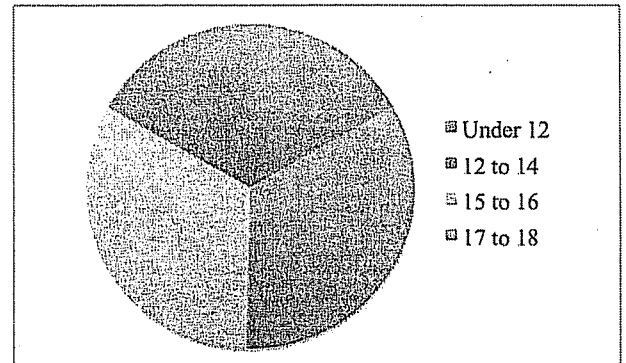
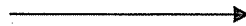
How many runaway and homeless children and youth are in Connecticut? *We still don't know!*

What *DO* we know?

National Runaway and Homeless Youth Management Information System (RHYMIS)

09/10 FY Total Youth in Youth Shelters: 270

Male:	114
Female:	156
<12 years:	45
12-14 years:	90
15-16 years:	88
17-18 years:	45



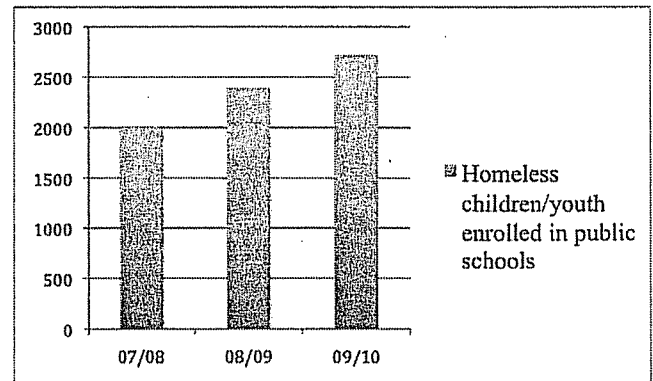
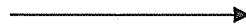
09/10 FY Total Street Outreach Contacts: 6188

CT Department of Education

Homeless children/youths enrolled in public school

2009-10 School Year Total: 2716

Pre-k – 2d grade:	931
Grades 3-5:	631
Grades 6-8:	553
Grades 9-10:	323
Grades 11-12:	269



CT Department of Children and Families

Runaway incidents of children/youth in DCF care

2009 Total: 1,807

2008 Total: 1,600

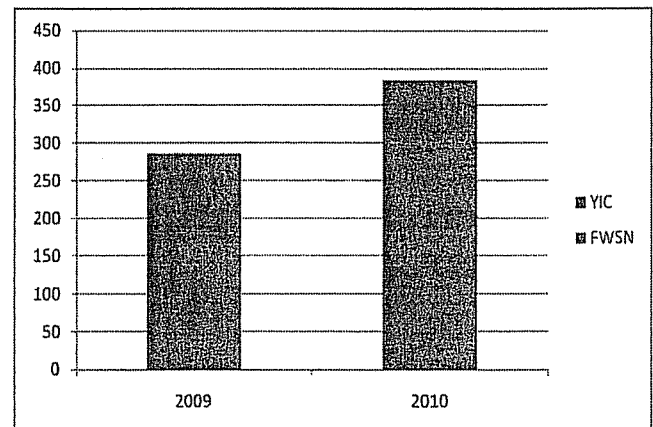
Minors as victims of prostitution reported to DCF: 61 (2008-2010)

CT Court Support Services Division

Jan 2010-Dec 2010 Runaways (unique clients):

FWSN: 313

YIC: 71



National Crime Information Center (NCIC)

Active runaway cases on 10/20/08: 236

Purged runaway records for 2008: 4,300

